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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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COMMUNIST REVOLUTION: THE ANTIDOTE TO CAPITALIST CRISIS

Capitalism is the deadliest disease on the planet. The only way to achieve immunity against this sick system is to fight for communism. Be part of the cure, join PLP!

WASHINGTON DC, October 28—"I don't know what I've been told, pharma's pockets lined with gold!" Lies and tricks will not divide, humanity standing side by side"; "14 billion doses NOW"; "No more pharma greed, global vaccines are what we need" and "Break the patents!" These chants rang out as 100 people marched to the Executive Office Building near the White House to demand the liberal Joe Biden administration end the pharmaceutical industry's control of vaccine patents.

The multinational and multiracial character of the demonstration demonstrated the value and necessity of internationalism and working class unity. Covid-19's devastating worldwide spread has hurt workers the hardest in accordance with the racist, sexist and imperialist nature of capitalism itself. The revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) represented these politics at the rally today, adding chants that were picked up like, "This is what SOLIDARITY looks like".

After the rally downtown, 30 workers and PL'ers marched to the home of Jeffrey Zeintz, who heads Biden's Covid Response Team. He refused to meet us, so we camped out all night outside his house, and at 6 am rang alarm clocks and had a bullhorn rally to "wake him up" to the need for global vaccines.

Vaccine equity NOW!

Rallying on the eve of the G20 meetings, organizers from the reform group "Justice is Global" were joined by public health workers including Public Health Awakened (PHA), medical students from Rutgers University, PLP members, and several other groups to demand that the Biden administration make vaccine equity a reality around the world.

They called upon the U.S. to demand the G20 countries support the TRIPS waiver, which would release the patents on Moderna and Pfizer mRNA vaccines to all countries. Providing resources to countries to produce mRNA vaccines themselves is needed to guarantee that people everywhere can be vaccinated.

The capitalist drive for maximum profit prevents the capitalist system from solving the global Covid-19 epidemic, let alone addressing how unequally SARS-CoV-2 has affected workers worldwide. The drive for vaccinations again illustrates how only replacing the profit system with global communism can meet our class's global needs. PLP members brought this message to this rally by selling CHALLENGE, engaging in extended discussions with other participants, and gaining contacts with several of the organizers present.

"We have the tools but not the politics"

Scientists have explained with evidence-based reasoning that vaccinating the entire working class can stop the spread of Covid-19, including its variants, and decrease the risk of new variants that might not respond to vaccinations and emerging

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JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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SCAN ME

OUR FIGHT

✪Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✪The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✪Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✪While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✪Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

U.S. rulers hack Facebook to install fascism

As the liberal U.S. bosses escalate their attacks on tech giant Facebook (now rebranded as "Meta"), their pretense of "protecting democracy" against "domestic terrorism" is in fact an exercise of state control and capitalist dictatorship. As the U.S. accelerates toward more open fascism and global conflict, their rulers must first and foremost discipline their own class.

When whistleblower Frances Haugen leaked thousands of documents to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), she revealed what were mostly open secrets: Facebook's sexist body-shaming of teenaged girls on Instagram; its open market for sex trafficking of women and children; its callous promotion of clickbait racism (CNN, 10/28). This is business as usual in the maximum-profit world of social media. What's new is the liberal bosses' urgency to crack down on billionaires like Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and force them to fall in line with the rulers' agenda.

To understand the liberals' move toward fascism, the natural response of capitalism in crisis, we must look at the deepening split within the U.S. ruling class. The Big Fascists, the finance capitalists representing the wealthiest bosses and most powerful multinational corporations, are the architects of an imperialist world order they've dominated since World War II. The Small Fascists, the opposition wing mobilized by Donald Trump, make most of their profits domestically and oppose higher taxes for the next big war. At stake is the future of U.S. imperialism.

With their empire in decline, the Big Fascists won't give up world dominance without a fight—most likely with capitalist archrival China. To prepare for war, rulers turn to fascism—first to discipline and unify their own ranks, then to control the working class. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they must use every instrument in their state apparatus, including the internet and social media. The U.S. government investigations of Facebook are a step toward organizing all of society while building patriotism and nationalism for imperialist war. That is why Progressive Labor Party fights to win our class to reject fascism and fight for a communist alternative.

The hammer of discipline leads to fascism

While Zuckerberg leans toward the Big Fascists, his short-sighted individualism makes him unreliable. He donated $419 million to turn out the Democratic vote in 2020 (NY Post, 10/14) and funded the failed Newark charter school initiative, a pet project for the liberal bosses. But most of all, Zuckerberg is for Zuckerberg. He's the controlling shareholder of a company valued at more than $900 billion. Facebook's algorithms are engineered to generate maximum likes, shares, attention, and ad revenues. Given the racist, sexist essence of capitalist society, it was inevitable that racists and sexists—representing fascists big and small—would dominate the platform.

For the liberal U.S. rulers, reining in tech kingpins is nothing new. In 1998, under President Bill Clinton, the Department of Justice brought an antitrust suit against Microsoft to force Bill Gates into finance capital's tent. Now social media are the ones under the gun. In the 2016 presidential races, the liberal bosses stood helpless as Trump expanded and weaponized his following through Twitter. They were infuriated when Facebook enabled Russian hackers to help throw Trump and the Small Fascists the election. They are determined not to let it happen again.

The Big Fascists' quandary is that social media is much harder to tame than the old media of TV networks and newspapers like the New York Times. After the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol in Washington, the rulers squeezed Twitter and Facebook to kick Trump off their platforms. From the evidence of last month's Congressional hearing, where Haugen was the star witness, more aggressive moves are coming.

Social media hurts working class

Under capitalism, everything that might have been a social good, like being able to stay connected with people far away, turns into its opposite. As a tool for profit, social media:

- Generates racist violence For many workers, Facebook IS their internet—and their main source of news. Along with WhatsApp, it has fomented ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia (harvardpolitics.com, 4/19), violence against Muslim workers in India (Slate, 10/26), and genocide against the Rohingya working class in Myanmar, a campaign that "has led to murder, rape and forced migration" (New York Times, 11/6/18). Trafficks women workers. In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Facebook knowingly serves as a market for enslavement: "the recruitment,...buying, and selling of domestic workers" (BBC, 9/23).
- Spreads anti-scientific lies and conspiracy theories "Facebook has facilitated the spread of misinformation [including anti-vaccination falsehoods], hate speech, and political polarization" (The Atlantic, 10/25). Regarding "combustible election misinformation," a former employee noted that "we amplify them and give them broader distribution" (NYT, 10/26).
- Fuels sexism and alienation "Passive consumption of sexually objectifying content on social networking sites...result in lowered body satisfaction and self-esteem, particularly in women" (Frontiers in Psychology, 8/25). Teens who regularly use social media are three times more likely to feel socially isolated (NPR, 3/6/17).
- Represses fightback Following the kkkop murder of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, police used social media platforms to map, identify, and arrest protesters (The Verge, 10/11/16). They did the same after the summer 2020 rebellions. As fascism rises, militant workers and communists in particular will be targeted and attacked. Clearly, we cannot use online organizing to replace real-life base-building and immersion in workers' lives.

Fascism and inter-imperialist rivalry

The imperialist bosses in China (and Russia) hold a big advantage over the Big Fascists in the U.S.: a unified ruling class that rigidly controls social media, and media in general.

So how could the U.S. bosses' slap-down of these rotten social media be a danger for the international working class? The enemy of our enemy is not our ally. Just as the finance capital main wing fights to shut down Small Fascist content, they will also shut down any dissent at odds with their patriotic war agenda—including CHALLENGE. The attack on Facebook is a precedent for a much broader assault upon the working class.

From chaos comes fascism but dark night shall have its end

We cannot afford to be complacent. A weakened U.S. is not an automatic opportunity for the working class. Out of the bosses' desperation comes fascism. Workers must arm ourselves with communist politics, a mass Progressive Labor Party, and a fighting red army. As we raise our red flag high, we raise it with CHALLENGE in hand! Only a communist revolution—the final conflict—will liberate our class. Long after the Zuckerbergs of the world and their billions have been ploughed under, it is a story we will tell ourselves, with communist media run by and for the working class.✪

APHA Convention

RX:Communism good for workers' health

WASHINGTON, DC, October 27—Progressive Labor Party (PLP) health workers once again sharpened the politics at the national convention of the American Public Health Association (APHA). Even as Covid-19 has kept the conference still mostly virtual, we were able to attack capitalist health care as serving the bosses profits system and not the needs of the working class. As in past years, we promoted an antiracist resolution that we had written with friends, prepared a special APHA Challenge supplement (bit.ly/APHA CHALLENGE), and presented a PLP program at the end of the conference. We were able to bring communist ideas into the struggle against racist public health conditions and challenge people to join the fight for communist revolution.

Putting communism front and center

Our virtual PLP program, "Racism and Capitalism: Is Communism the Solution?" was a great success. We promoted it during many sessions we attended all week during which we raised the issues of capitalism and communism. Eighty people attended and heard three young comrades speak about revolution versus reform, imperialism, and the need for a party.

One speaker challenged public health workers to go all the way "upstream" to smash capitalism, the root of social problems, instead of stopping with piecemeal reforms. The destruction of people's lives due to imperialism and its policies through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other organizations was clearly described with an emphasis on how capitalist international relations are NOT CHARITABLE.

When the third speaker asked what made people mad under capitalism the chat function went wild with multiple examples! We then had 30 minute breakout rooms of about six people each with a PLP facilitator where we discussed how revolutionaries participate in reform struggles and/or what went right and wrong in previous communist revolutions. Even more people were interested as 121 people registered for the event and all will get copies of the program. There were multiple requests for transcripts. One young participant was inspired to say "it's great that there are so many passionate and active people," and others liked the opportunity to discuss in the breakout rooms.

Capitalism will always incarcerate the working class

As police and prison reform efforts have spread around the country we have joined many of these struggles and discussions that have included prison abolition – a situation that can only exist for the working class after a communist revolution. The resolution, Advancing Public Health Interventions to Address the Harms of the Carceral System, had passed as a late-breaker last year but had to be resubmitted this year to become permanent policy.

We testified in the hearings on this resolution about the high incarceration rates in New Orleans where air conditioning is denied to prisoners, about the horrible conditions in detention centers where Covid-19 management is non-existent and medical care is incompetent, and how releasing prisoners during the pandemic did not lead to dangerous situations. The reviewers had initially given it a negative assessment but the authors doggedly pursued the issue within the APHA membership and finally the reviewers put it on the agenda and it passed with 86 percent in favor. It will be posted on the APHA website and public health workers and others can continue to use it in campaigns locally and nationally to decarcerate the prisons.

Keep fighting

The APHA is attended by thousands of public health workers each year who are dedicated to reform struggles for better health care and access. The APHA leadership is tied to Big Fascist main wing bosses(see glossary on page 6). The organization is there to ensure the bosses interests are advanced in public health care.

Our goal is to fight for the needs of the working class and build a communist movement led by PLP. When it is in person, we always organize a demonstration about a key issue and try to involve local workers and students who cannot afford to attend the expensive conference. In these actions we try to lead with advanced ideas that build confidence in the working class. Meanwhile, we continue to meet more and more fighters who question capitalism, like the three new young members who spoke at our session. We continue to fight for our position that capitalism can never provided decent health care for workers, who are only seen as commodities. We'll be back next year to bring the fight for communism to the conference in Boston.✪

Communist revolution: the antidote to capitalist crisis

CAPITALISM IS THE VIRUS. COMMUNISM IS THE CURE.

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treatments. As speakers pointed out, we have the tools but not the politics to end this pandemic.

A high point of the rally was when public health workers from PHA spoke emphatically about the current policy being a public health failure. These young professionals organized for this event at each step of the planning. PLP members have regularly met with PHA every two weeks over the past year and have pushed for more militancy in the group. We are excited by their leadership in this event and look forward to continuing the struggle against capitalism and racism.

Communism will defeat biggest viruses: imperialism and racism

The reform groups organizing the event channeled anger and boldness in attacking both the Biden administration and the pharmaceutical industry's greed. However, they failed to attack capitalism, connect capitalism with racism and imperialism, or offer real solutions.

Workers around the world are suffering in grotesque ways from this pandemic, and many other health and social conditions exacerbated by the pandemic. Victory in this struggle means breaking with the politicians in Congress and organizing for an international mass communist revolution to destroy capitalism instead. Without this perspective, we end up fruitlessly falling into the trap set by various factions of vicious capitalists and their politicians who run society.

Smash racist vaccine borders and join PLP

The capitalists, meanwhile, have linked the vaccine to profits by limiting who gets vaccinated. India, for example, is the world's largest vaccine producer but exports them to the biggest imperialists, despite the grand promises of the UN's COVAX program. Making the vaccine available for free in the U.S. while effectively denying it to the rest of world is a recipe for increased nationalism and extends the racist arrogance of U.S. imperialism even further. As long as we have capitalism, vaccines become just another tool in rivalry among the imperialists as Russia, China, and the U.S. use them to pursue their own alliances in a buildup for World War 3 rather than meet workers' needs.

The bosses once again are playing with our lives! We fight to build an international revolutionary PLP that can smash all borders and abolish money and make the vaccine freely available to all. While protesting Biden's bozos like Zeintz at six am are a good start, the urgency of this global struggle demands a different kind of wakeup call — a call to join PLP and sweep capitalism out of power with communist revolution! JOIN US!✪

Newark: workers fight racist kkkourts and kkkops

PL'ers and friends waiting for Rodwell/Spivey brothers to enter the court. When a class brother or sister is under attack, we can count on workers to have our back.

NEWARK, NJ, October 15—A multiracial, multigenerational group of workers in Newark flooded the courthouse as a show of action against racist policing. When Black workers are under attack, what do we do? WE STAND UP, FIGHT BACK! Since June 2021, the Newark Police Department (NPD) has stalked, harassed, terrorized, and arrested members of the Rodwell/Spivey family. After undercover police illegally and brutally stopped and frisked one of their family members, the Rodwell/Spivey brothers and their neighbors bravely stepped in. While Mayor Ras Baraka's right arm reform organization, People Organizing for Progress (POP) have dragged their feet to aid the family, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) immediately went to meet with and build a defense team for our working class brothers and sisters. The main lesson learned from the Rodwell/Spivey struggle is that liberal politicians and reformists are the main danger. The liberal section of the capitalist class utilizes Black politicians like Ras Baraka to shortchange workers' quality of life, while laying the groundwork for liberal fascism.

Real fightback vs performative solidarity

As the terror from the state continues, so does the movement to fight back. At the courthouse, over 30 PL'ers, organizers, and friends attended to give support and call for Justin of the Rodwell Spivey families to be freed and all charges to be dropped. PLP and friends stood outside of the courthouse to give speeches about why they came out. A local high school teacher started off by explaining the importance of leading by example. "As a history teacher I can talk about the importance of understanding the lessons of the past antiracist struggles, but we know that leading by example is the best lesson that any teacher can put together. Our students need to see that the struggle continues and what it looks like to be a part of it."

A worker for a non profit exposed the hypocrisy of the moment. She pointed out the painted street that read "BLACK LIVES MATTER" and the new Dr. Martin Luther King statue nearby, while Black, white, and Latin cops and politicians terrorize present-day anti-racist fighters. While Baraka and liberal misleaders in POP engage in performative activism, PL'ers practice communist thinking and fight back to smash racism for good.

State terror against Black workers

On June 1, cops racially profiled a group of Black men while they looked at clothes in a van. After jumping out of a police wagon and attacking one of the men, the police illegally searched and brutally attacked the rest. The brothers, watching from their house, came out to defend them. Had they not done so, the KKKops might have killed them. As antiracist communists, we know when workers fight back, it scares the ruling class. From a young age, educational institutions under capitalism teach us that workers are supposed to revere cops, even when workers see the differences in how they treat and divide workers. In this instance, the police–with the aid of Newark's Black, liberal Mayor, Ras Baraka–showed how they only serve fascism. In the ensuing days after the attack, the cops stormed into their house with guns drawn while the family was sleeping and crushed insulin belonging to the youngest brother. Days later, NPD set up mobile precinct trucks outside of their house, forced them and any visitors on the block to show identification, and to this day the KKKops continue to survey and occupy the block.

For millions of workers around the world,police terror will always exist as long as capitalism, a system that thrives on the violence of exploitation, exists. Capitalists need viciously racist cops to defend and legitimize its oppressive dictatorship. Thus smashing capitalism is the only viable form of self defense for our class. Only when workers reject dead end reforms and liberal politicians, and fight directly for communism will we rid ourselves of police terror. Fighting for communism means smashing the exploitative profit and wage system that breeds racist and sexist inequality, sociopathy, and criminality. It means building a world where there is no need for cops, because workers will run all aspects of society to ensure our collective safety and wellbeing. Communism means real justice.

What is the international significance of this case? Like Joe Biden's Border Patrol attacks immigrants, Baraka's KKKop attacks in Newark represent what we can expect from liberal capitalist bosses–more death and terror for Black workers. Like the Scottsboro case in the 1930s, communists must once again lead an international fightback to free the Rodwell/Spivey family and their neighbors from the grip of liberal state terror.

Courts, tool of the bosses

Capitalists use the courts to repress working class fightback. At the court proceedings, young Black men are brought in chained like slaves. While three of the brothers attacked by the cops were released, Justin is still imprisoned in Essex County Detention Center as Covid-19, rodent infestations, and abuse run rampant in NJ jails. All four of the Rodwell/Spivey brothers are being charged with resisting arrest, aggravated assault, obstruction of justice, and assault of an officer as prosecutors try to break the family with delays and withholding of key evidence. Justin has not been able to be home with his two children since June.

PLP has stood with the Rodwell/Spivey family since they began to fight back over the summer. We will continue to fight until Justin is freed and all of the charges are dropped against the brothers. However, we can't ignore the contradiction in this campaign. No matter how big or militant a reform movement gets, without a push for communism, workers around the world will never receive justice from the level of state repression we face. However, being part of antiracist fightback is essential for our class to learn how to smash racism and build a world where workers are central.

As one PLP member said at the courthouse after the family thanked them for coming, "This fight isn't just about your family. Across Newark, and the world, police are constantly terrorizing the working class - especially Black workers. For every one family that fights back, hundreds accept the attacks because of fear. We need to fight back not just to show the ruling class that they can't terrorize us without retribution, but to give the working class confidence that they can fight back." Join PLP at the Veteran's Courthouse, Thursday, November 18 at 9:00 AM! ✪

Little red school: new members sign up for communism 101

NEW YORK CITY, November 1—"I'm moving at a snail's pace, but I'm getting stronger." That's how one comrade spoke for all of us as our Progressive Labor Party (PLP) club launched our new members' class. Over the past 18 months, our club has recruited three new members, Black, Latin, and white, women and men, older and younger.

One is an unemployed worker, won out of an antiracist fightback around homelessness. Another is a staff member at a community college, and the third is a full-time professor at City University. Both are involved in our work in the CUNY staff and faculty union, PSC, and all three have been to May Day. They each have strong, long-term personal/political ties with one or more members of our collective.

We launched the class to strengthen our new comrades ideologically, make them more familiar with the main aspects of PLP's outlook, and thereby strengthen our entire collective and our ability to build a communist world. We started by discussing the front-page CHALLENGE article on the girls' volleyball team in a Brooklyn H.S. fighting racism (CHALLENGE, Oct.20).

One member quickly pointed out the unequal funding between sports teams that are mainly white students versus those that are mainly Black and Latin students, and how the bosses enforce racist inequality through their state power, in this case the New York City Department of Education. Another showed how this struggle reflected three of the 10 points in the PLP "Our Fight" column; anti-racism, anti-sexism, and collectivity over individualism. The third stressed how PLP's involvement in mass activity, like the volleyball team or the annual Hoops for Justice event against police terror, allows the Party to raise our politics with a wide range of people in a very concrete way. Everyone focused on "What is winning," and how struggles like this can literally be "schools for communism."

We discussed base building, and how PLP has deep, long-standing ties with students, teachers, and parents at this school. The new members didn't know this and thought that we should make that clear in future articles. They also wanted to know more about the discussions with students, teachers, and parents about PLP because they are trying to have similar conversations. What questions did people raise? How did we answer them?

Over the next few months, we will introduce dialectical materialism (Jailbreak!: Dialectical Materialism), how PLP operates (On Democratic Centralism), Black workers as a key force for revolution, and why revolutionaries must fight nationalism. The first two texts mentioned can be found under 'Key Documents' on plp.org. We are open to suggestions and if there are similar classes, please share your experiences by writing a letter to CHALLENGE. ✪

Día de Los Muertos honors victims of racist police terror

LOS ANGELES, November 1—*As communists, we know everything is political. We strive to make that apparent to our friends and the entire working class. It is with this in mind that we took Día de Los Muertos, a holiday to honor the dead, and united with impacted families to not only honor loved ones, but indict this racist system that stole them from us. The event with about 75 attendees included dinner, music, poetry, a police car shaped piñata, and a pin the Molotov cocktail on the cop car game.*

A poem, excerpted below, was written and performed by a comrade who has spent the last two years immersed in the struggle against police murder. As a Party, we have consistently injected revolutionary politics into the reform struggle. This poem lays out the current struggle we are waging –that police murder cannot be reformed away. KKKops will only be abolished when we overthrow the entire system of capitalism through a revolution led by Progressive Labor Party. The poem was well received and we will follow up with a Party forum discussing this very topic.

Día de los Muertos

This Día de los Muertos
We honor Nicholas Burgos
And all those souls the police stole
With stories of our loved ones told
Break bread, art and music
And a film with raised tombstones
Flowered by multiracial fists and Mexican marigolds
And poems
Both passionate and bold
And gotta fight like Ghada writes
Tonight
We deepen our ties
And love a little deeper
See past the masks and masquerades
Of politicians that parade by
But instead listen
What are those who passed away trying to say?
What is the lesson?

I think of Julius Fuchick on this night of hallow
A Czechoslovakian communist who wrote notes on scraps in secret
Even as he faced certain death by Nazi gallows
He said, "in real life there are no spectators: you all participate in life"
His work in the underground helped defeat fascism and inspired Ricardo Neftalí Basoalto
You know him as Pablo
But you probably didn't know it
That he took the name of a Czechoslovakian poet Neruda—

So what are the deceased who live on within us trying to tell us?
The building blocks of life are found on icy rocks of comets
The universe is ours!
But beyond the poetry and astrophysics
Capitalism is killing us and the environment
It's never been more apparent
But if only common sense was enough
If we couple it with scientific philosophy
We can learn that we need to be communists

Cuz the jig is up and the vote is in
Drugs are being criminalized by Joe Biden again
A public health crisis like covid
And we are dying by the hundreds of thousands
From synthetic opioids and overdoses
And guaranteed more police violence
The community harm – you name it
Are these sins of capitalism?

And forever destined to repeat
Because they're imprinted in the profits
And foundations of finance on Wall Street
Which has stood the test of every reform for centuries
Including Abolition and a civil war
We live in one of the most democratic cities
In the most democratic state in one of the most democratic countries
And it cages the most people than any place on Earth
So where does this confidence that their state apparatus can work for us come from?

Continued on page 7

Strikers hungry for change, fed class consciousness

A few months ago, a community organization to which I belong to, along with other PL'ers, participated in a hunger strike, which lasted over 20 days. The struggle for social services for undocumented workers brought people closer to Progressive Labor Party and built class-consciousness.

One PL'er said these struggles were too pacifist. After discussing it, we decided that we would participate in order to stand shoulder to shoulder with our class. By struggling with our friends, we raise consciousness our class' consciousness and learn how to fight back against the capitalist system.

This strike was for undocumented workers who did not receive any social services related to the pandemic. The strike was fulfilled and in the end they managed to win. Unfortunately, the benefits were minimal and not for everyone. This is how capitalism works: they only give you painkillers or candy to stomach the struggles.

The hunger strike was light since we were housed in a church with small beds, heating, refrigerated water, a daily visits from a doctor. All fighters deserve our appreciation, respect and consideration, for the solidarity, responsibility and conscience shown in this fight. We had doubts about the strike since the organizers made this strike a "commercial" strike, in which all participants receieved a financial contribution for each day of fasting... can you imagine that?

Days after the pyrrhic "victory," the community organization had their annual gala of recognition. The organization's leaders asked the members to choose a striker to speak at the gala, and they chose a member of PLP. Majority participants are workers, loyal to a community organization that works under the rules of the liberal Democratic Party, from which they receive funds.

Fifteen years of organizing

But we have more than 15 years of work by a group of communist fighters, who in each meeting, in each protest, in each march, in one way or another, have led with the politics of our Party, speaking with the truth, exposing the capitalist system, which will never meet the needs of the working class.

We distributed countless newspapers over the years. We proposed and convened three worker conferences, with the participation of around 100 people in each one, among many other things, which have contributed to the growth of our group. Sometimes, two steps forward and one step back, but growing in our mission to increase the ranks of our international communist movement through PLP.

Workers respond to speech by joining PL study group

In the speech, the PL'er said the strike victory gave a crumb to essential undocumented workers, who were unemployed during that period of the pandemic and did not receive help of any kind, neither state nor federal, for not having a social security numbers.

In the speech, he referred to how workers are in similar struggles worldwide, in which thousands are repressed, massacred and imprisoned by the capitalist forces. This includes Colombia, Haiti, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Spain, France, and more.

He also mentioned how this struggle against the attack on undocumented workers built unity among the members. In addition, it showed that our working class is increasingly alert and that, organized and led by our PLP, the next step can be taken, towards a communist revolution, when they become aware of our power. And that capitalists' control over workers can be smashed with the seizure of workers' power.

The speech at the gala concluded with these chants: "Workers united, you will never be defeated! The workers fights have no borders! This fist is seen, the workers at power!"

They resounded in the venue and ended with an ovation.

Following the speech at the gala, 40 people on our study group list received the speech that was made. The response: 17 people attended the study group to discuss immigration reform. We will continue our work in the community organization, leading with, as always, our communist line. We will continue working with our friends, to attract new fighters.

The final victory will be when we abolish wage slavery and we are treated as workers who have realized their full power. This will be under a communist society. Join and lead this fight with PLP!✪

CHALLENGE Responds:

Progressive Labor Party (PLP) does not view hunger strikes as a viable tactic, as its premise is that we can guilt our oppressors into submission. In reality, our lives do not matter to the ruling class. If liberation from exploitation and starvation is the goal, our strategy should be to smash our attackers and fight for communism. While we fundamentally disagree with resorting to hunger strikes as a form of protests, we do stand in solidarity with the class struggle in this dark night.✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Laying the tracks for class struggle

I have been involved with a group of bus and rail transit workers for over a year. I am retired but part of this group of organizers. We have had rallies, demonstrations, virtual and now in-person meetings, confronted sellout union leadership, fliers, and participated in a YouTube radio show (twice) that has a growing following. Union members have led and organized these struggles!

At our most recent in-person meeting, we had a struggle about the Covid-19 vaccine. Everyone there, except one person was vaccinated. A bus driver told us about her co-worker and friend who died of Covid-19 a few days before. She said she would try to win people to get the vaccine. A rail mechanic said we have to respect and care for others and that is one reason he got the vaccine - to protect the more vulnerable people in his life. Someone mentioned that we have to respect the point of view of workers that are hesitant about the vaccine, while at the same time pointing out the racist nature of the police union. We all agreed that the mandate would be used to punish workers. Yet police are being put forward by some members of our class as leaders that the anti-vaxxer union members should respect and follow.

It was hard for me to struggle against these ideas, which strengthen individualism and reject science and history. Workers in our base say they don't want to be told what to do and or have their personal choice violated. Racism in medical care for Black and Latin workers has clearly contributed to many of workers' mistrust and fear. Yet, racism has guaranteed that Black and Latin workers are dying at higher rates than white workers. It's apparent I have not struggled hard enough to win friends and union brothers and sisters to the Party's line about the growth of fascism.

There is a lot of work to be done! Selling CHALLENGE and discussing the articles, struggling over communist ideas - this is what we need to do!

★★★★★

'I'm a communist, too!'"

Despite the pandemic, students and workers have not stopped organizing. This fall I participated in two overnight events alone. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and friends can learn from these struggle opportunities. The first was a protest in Annapolis, Maryland with CASA calling on the Governor to extend the eviction moratorium.

After the rally I spent the night with 50 tenants and supporters at a church parking lot. We met from 9 PM to midnight! At one point I said I was there because "I hate capitalism and am a communist!" This was different from people saying they were there because housing is a human right. Several people asked for CHALLENGE after hearing my politics and three of them said "I'm a communist too."

I spent a cold, rainy night outside of the White House Covid Response Coordinator, Jeffrey Zients' house with 20 young workers and joined the 6 AM wake up call (see article on Page 3). Each hour outside, we lit candles and read about workers from other countries who had died of Covid-19. One particularly intense story was about the death of Dr. Charles, a revered OB-GYN doctor from Uganda that fought for women's rights and died without ever making it into a hospital.

There were a lot of political and social conversations throughout the night and capitalism was discussed much more than at the rally itself. It was great meeting the folks in person who I had been on Zoom with planning the event for weeks.

I now plan to send CHALLENGE to several of these folks from as far away as Portland, Oregon. I did raise the Party's line in these conversations but both events would have been even better with more PLP members in attendance. Be on the lookout for opportunities like these and bring a good sleeping bag.

★★★★★

GLOSSARY

COMMUNIST TERMS

Fascism

Capitalism's response to a crisis of their system, when the bosses can no longer sustain the charade of liberal democracy and resort to more direct control and state terror instead. Fascism is marked by the ruling capitalists disciplining their own ranks to serve the urgent needs of the capitalist state and weather the crisis. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they use all the means available in their state apparatus, including violence. To build unity within their class and loyalty from workers, they rely on nationalist politics and calls for sacrifice. Their strategy is to mislead the working class to kill our working class sisters and brothers in the next inter-imperialist war.

Big Fascists

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalist faction of the U.S. ruling class. They represent the wealthiest and most powerful bosses in the U.S., including multinational banks like Chase and Citibank, multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil, the big automakers, Boeing, Amazon, and the major media companies. As the dominant grouping since World War II, the Big Fascists were the architects of the liberal world order with the U.S. bosses on top. Their dominance rests on U.S. financial and military power and its strategic control of the Middle East and the flow of oil to Europe, Asia, and Africa. To sustain this dominance, they need to rebuild a huge, multiracial military for inter-imperialist war, most likely with China.

Small Fascists

The Small Fascists are a group of domestically oriented U.S. capitalists who are challenging the Big Fascists over the direction of U.S. imperialism. Since their interests are less tied to controlling the flow of oil, they are against heavy taxation to keep troops in the Middle East and in general oppose costly military bases and invasions. They're willing to rely on a smaller, whiter army, backed by nuclear weapons and the Air Force. They use open racism to build a political following.

Día de Los Muertos honors victims of racist police terror

Continued from page 5

When billionaires fund U.S. imperialism abroad
Do we raise a fist or a brow?
What is in it for them?

When folks who claim to be the new political sages
Maybe using different language up on these stages
Sounding radical but with the same message wrapped in a new package Do we still say they're the lesser evil, the answer, or do we get enraged?
And recognize the fundamental flaws of simply passing laws
Focusing on the effects and not the cause. Going to the polls for politicians within institutions designed for our demise

Petitioning for legislation that can purportedly abolish their policing
That they created and control since day one in this country
Is not up for discussion let alone defunding
The belief that through passing bills or even with a storm on capitol hill
That this system can be abolished piecemeal
Without a violent revolution to end this whole damn system
Is the new opiate of the masses—
It's about more than shutting it down and burning it down
But what do we build now and in its place?

The genius of the masses is found
Where the struggle abounds
In the groundedness
Yes it's about the sun on high but without the fertile dirt
It's the difference between Mars and Earth

So what is our class trying to teach us
The working class
That is screaming out segregated
Like our dearly departed
But trying to reach us
In desperate need of organization
We are inevitably defeated before we get started
If we don't build a communist Party

I know this poem
Is only words on a page
Like pan de muerto on an altar
But consider this food for thought
From those beyond the grave
Resting in power

And when
Maria, Evelia
Marie, Pamela

Sam, Amanda
Rosa, Eloina Leti, Hilda
Deanna, Christina
Valerie, Barbara
Lisa, Lea
Emily, Jonetta
Ghada,

Hasta la Victoria!
Victoria
When we join together.

Book Review of Inflamed

Cure for chronic capitalism: communism!

The popular book *Inflamed* (2021), by Rupa Marya and Raj Patel, is both enlightening and enraging. While they expose the environment as a culprit for most diseases, their solution is backwards—as in go back to a pre-capitalist society. Marya and Patel suffer from anti-communism.

Inflamed has several themes. One is that inflammation is behind most disease processes in all parts of our bodies, an idea more accepted by conventional medicine. The authors carry the idea further, showing how the environment, both physical and social, is deeply entwined with inflammation. The second main theme is that modern medicine has detached bodily systems from each other and the body from the world it inhabits, just as modern humans have fallen out of harmony with themselves and the world around them. They argue many indigenous cultures are better synchronized with their environment.

However, a solution is sorely lacking. They describe our environment as colonialism and as capitalist colonialism. The supposed remedy is to emulate non-industrial cultures by "walking backward into the future" (p. 351). But the authors do not address how not to return to pre-capitalism, but to consider what comes after capitalism and how to get there.

The main problem with the book is anti-communism. If you don't believe it is possible to construct a society run by and for the working class through organizing a Party, then your only option is to persuade capitalists to be nicer exploiters. These authors proclaim communism will always fail because of individualist human nature. Progressive Labor Party believes workers can run a society based on the common good.

Stress: the body's response to capitalism

Acute inflammation may result from an infection, injury or psychological stress and initiate healing mechanisms like fever, bacteria hunting macrophages, wound healing, and the fight or flight reflex. Stress is the body's response to any threat, and it activates the nervous, endocrine and immune systems to produce inflammatory signaling proteins (cytokines) and hormones to respond in the short term.

Chronic stress, however, may generate a chronic reaction from which the body never heals, be it from ongoing pollution, exploitation, and poor working and living conditions, or the stress of racist and sexist inequality under capitalism. Chronic stress leads to chronic diseases: diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, osteoarthritis, chronic obstructive lung disease, and Alzheimer's. Even aging is accelerated by chronic stress (p. 68).

The authors detail the ways our systems are affected by inflammation. Stress activates an axis from the brain that releases hormones like cortisol and adrenaline that in turn activate immune cells to release C-reactive protein and others. In the face of chronic stress this mechanism is disrupted, resulting in constant low-grade inflammation.

The response to new threats is lessened and the body is less able to defend against infections, such as Covid-19(p. 92). We know that chronic diseases like diabetes and chronic obstructive lung disease result both from inflammation and toxins like air pollution.

Inflammatory racism

The Covid-19 pandemic explains how modern medicine both ignores the higher toll of disease on Black, Latin, indigenous, and Asian working-class people in particular and our class in general. Racism means that members of the super-exploited group have higher C-reactive protein, a marker of chronic inflammation. This is true of Black workers in the U.S., Muslim workers in Burma, Dalit workers in India and many more (p. 232). Compared to white workers, Black workers in the U.S. have higher rates of chronic diseases and have a shorter life expectancy—all conditions related to inflammation.

The authors give examples of how indigenous cultures have avoided high stress levels. However, when any of these societies were disrupted by colonization and the imposition of modern industrial agriculture and production for profit, disease and social disruption followed. The drive for profit hurts workers' health.

What is to be done

So how can we change that world? Although we can learn from indigenous societies, today's conditions are different. We can't recreate life from the past for the mass of the world's population in a sustainable way. Communism, a society run by the world's workers for the world's workers, is the future we need.

The authors support the movement to abolish the police that target and kill disproportionately Black and Latin members of our class. The demand is to redirect police funds to housing, schools, job creation and other community resources (p. 258). The authors write, "Abolishing the modern private corporation doesn't mean ending coordinated enterprise but rather holding it accountable to the people it serves''(p. 334). However, the authors' own evaluation of the hunger for profits, the cruelty of capitalist exploitation, and the violence perpetrated in world conquest illustrates the illogic of this demand. Their anti-communism leads them to reject the logical conclusions of their own research.

A system that produces global starvation and severe inequality for the benefit of a few private owners needs a repressive force to quell dissent. A system based on profits, capitalism, cannot sacrifice profits to benefit workers.

We need a movement to destroy capitalism. This will require a violent, massive, international struggle that will be built on the basis of reform struggles focusing on multiracial worker-led movements and not building illusions about reforming capitalism.

This movement may also be inspired by the worsening cataclysms that capitalism will bring—climate disasters and world war. As a new worker-led society is constructed, many of the insights about medicine and the connection of the physical and social environments to our health will become clearer. But only then.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Plan to tax billionaires fizzles fast

Forbes, 10/29–Anti-billionaire sentiment and calls to close the wealth inequality gap led Democratic lawmakers earlier this week to float an ambitious plan to tax the unrealized capital gains of the richest people in America. It was pretty much dead on arrival. A day later, Democrats came out with a new recommendation as part of President Joe Biden's "Build Back Better" plan. This one would only levy a surtax on incomes—rather than the unrealized gains—of the ultra-rich…Forbes estimated what the 20 richest U.S. billionaires would have to pay had the new proposed tax passed…an astonishing $345 billion.

The wealthiest 400 Americans were worth a collective $4.5 trillion in September 2021,...3% of the nation's total household wealth.

Migrants endure horrific conditions

Der Spiegel, 10/22–Wickendy Romain was lucky. The Haitian is standing in the harbor of Necoclí, a village in northern Colombia…The 31-year-old has managed to get a hold of one of the few tickets for the crossing of the Gulf of Urabá. This, he believes, is his ticket to a new life in the United States of America. Behind him, thousands of people are crowded at the barrier. Families with small children, pregnant women. Security forces swing their batons, yell "get out" and try to push the people back.

Right after crossing the Gulf of Urabá, they will need to enter the jungle connecting Colombia and Panama, the rainforest of Darién. They will face an approximately six-day journey by foot through a dangerous forest where getting lost is common.

On the Colombian side of the border, the jungle is controlled by the infamous Clan del Golfo, which also smuggles humans and is involved in the illicit organ trade. On the Panamanian side, armed gangs attack the families, steal, rape and murder. A woman from Haiti sits down on the ground and begins to cry. She speaks of the numerous dead bodies she saw in the forest, perhaps 20 of them. In the water, along the path, in tents, half-decomposed mothers with children. "Why did I make it and the others didn't," she implores. "I'm no better than them!" One family couldn't give them anything, so they killed their 12-year-old daughter in front of the parents' eyes with the machete.

China accelerates military competition with U.S.

New York Times, 10/27–China's testing of a hypersonic missile designed to evade American nuclear defenses was "very close" to a "Sputnik moment" for the United States, Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Wednesday in the first official confirmation of…a missile that completed a partial orbit of the earth, and a hypersonic vehicle that could plow a suddenly shifting path, maneuvering in ways that would render all current U.S. missile defenses obsolete…current anti missile technology is designed to intercept intercontinental ballistic warheads on predictable, parabolic paths in outer space — not hypersonic weapons that can zig and zag through the atmosphere.

An inevitable rivalry

Foreign Affairs, November/December, 2021–Three decades ago, the Cold War ended, and the United States had won. It was now the sole great power on the planet. Population size and wealth are the main building blocks of military power, so there was a serious possibility that China might become dramatically stronger in the decades to come. Since a mightier China would surely challenge the U.S. position in Asia and possibly beyond, the logical choice for the United States was clear: slow China's rise.

Beguiled by misguided theories about liberalism's inevitable triumph and the obsolescence of great-power conflict, both Democratic and Republican administrations pursued a policy of engagement, which sought to help China grow richer. Washington promoted investment in China and welcomed the country into the global trading system.

Today, China and the United States are locked in what can only be called a new cold war—an intense security competition that touches on every dimension of their relationship. This rivalry will test U.S. policymakers more than the original Cold War did, as China is likely to be a more powerful competitor than the Soviet Union was in its prime. And this cold war is more likely to turn hot.

BATTLE OF LENINGRAD

COMMUNIST-LED WORKERS' 'IMPOSSIBLE' VICTORY' DEFEATS NAZIS

Soviet workers gatheri water during the seige

Anti-communist writers depict the resistance to the Nazi siege of Leningrad during World War II as simply an example of workers' fortitude and courage in the face of extreme suffering and adversity. They say virtually nothing about the role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

This is no accident! After all, the role of the capitalist media and "scholarship" is to provide propaganda for the U.S. bosses. They don't want workers to learn how communist leadership and ideas were essential to the defeat of the Nazis in World War II and how communist leadership and ideas are needed today to defeat racism, fascism and imperialist wars. As regional wars cover the globe, as world war and climate change threatens the planet, as starvation and a pandemic rage unchecked, capitalism is a failure for the world's workers. We need communism, where workers run society. The defeat of the Nazis at Leningrad was an example of communist-led workers' power.

Nazis invade Soviet Union and surround Leningrad

On June 22, l94l, the Nazi army - the most powerful army ever assembled - invaded the Soviet Union. The Nazis and their European allies rapidly surrounded Leningrad. This city of three million was cut off from the rest of the Soviet Union.

Hitler ordered the city of Leningrad and its population to be destroyed. A 900-day siege followed. It resulted in one million deaths and two million other casualties – far more than the combined deaths of the U.S. and Great Britain during the entire war.

Hitler vowed to destroy Leningrad because it was the center of the Bolshevik Revolution. It was named after Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the world communist movement. Hitler figured Leningrad's destruction would not only be a big military victory, but a huge psychological victory also. The Nazis believed the destruction of the city and its inhabitants would be a blow from which the Soviets could never recover.

Initially, the Nazis amassed massive military strength against the defenders of Leningrad. Enormous bombing and shelling accompanied a tank and troop assault. Daily air attacks and Nazi cannons bombarded every square block of the city every day for two and a-half years.

Communist-led workers fight back

But workers in Leningrad fought on. Despite mass starvation and enormous destruction, they fought back harder. Unlike Paris, Amsterdam and other European cities, Leningrad did not fall! But there was no way supplies could get to the city and little possibility of evacuating children, the old and the ill. Then the leadership of the Communist Party sent in some of its top leaders to strengthen the efforts. A road was built over the frozen Lake Ladoga. Morale increased. Despite the apparently hopeless situation, over a million people, the old and the young were evacuated. Supplies were brought in. The workers and soldiers of Leningrad fought and produced in sub-zero temperatures. Nothing could stop them.

What anti-communist historians and documentaries pointedly omit is that communist ideas and leadership can win workers to unprecedented mass heroism. The workers of Leningrad shed their capitalist ideas and actions. To defeat the Nazis, communist living and fighting was essential. Everyone worked without material rewards. Everyone had to share, so the frontline troops had enough food to be able to fight against the ferocious German attacks. The Communist Party ensured that everyone took part in making decisions. Everyone participated in discussions. Politics was primary. Just as Hitler called for the destruction of Leningrad, the Communist Party, led by Josef Stalin, called on Leningrad not to surrender.

The Communist Party started by organizing small airlifts to drop supplies. Later, the Red Army organized convoys of trucks to transport supplies across frozen Lake Ladoga. Despite constant bombings and huge casualties to drivers, these convoys kept the supplies coming. Under the worst conditions drivers made the round trip again and again, often going for days without sleep.

As the thaw developed, the lake started to melt. But the drivers kept on driving. As the ice melted, water engulfed the trucks above the hubcaps. But the drivers, risking drowning - and some did drown - kept driving. Their efforts were a reflection of the heroism of the city's inhabitants and of the troops defending the city.

Red Army does the "impossible"— defeats Nazis

Slowly but surely the all-out efforts to supply Leningrad and its defenders started to pay off. Small breakthroughs were made in the ring of steel that the Nazis and their allies had thrown up around Leningrad. Then the Party ordered a rail line built between Moscow and Leningrad. Now the trains started to roll, often only yards away from Nazi gun emplacements. The trains rolled on, despite a rain of shells and bombs, and despite heavy casualties to the train crews.

At last the Red Army was strong enough to launch massive counter-attacks. Then they did the "impossible," smashing through the Nazi ring of steel and defeating the fascist forces. Leningrad was free! Working class communist determination triumphed over Nazi "supermen." By the end of the siege, most of the children of Leningrad had been evacuated. Then, the children returned. They were the living future of a city that had been pronounced dead.

The main lesson of Leningrad, and Moscow, and Stalingrad is that when armed with communist ideas and communist leadership, the working class is invincible. No matter how strong the bosses appear, we, the working class, are stronger – IF we act on communist ideas. Workers around the world are not very different from workers in Leningrad. With revolutionary ideas, under revolutionary communist leadership, workers everywhere can make "miracles" too. With world war looming between the imperialists of the U.S., China, Russia and their capitalist allies, the workers of the world must unite and turn these profiteering wars into a worldwide, class war for workers' power. That's communism. Join us!✪

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